

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA IMMEDIATE

USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR

USCINCUSNAVEUR

NAVDET SOUDA BAY CRETE

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES

COMSIXTHFLT

COMFAIRMED NAPLES

CTF SIX THREE

NAF SIGNELLA IT

USNMR SHAPE BRUSSELS

CHJUSMAAG ATHENS

USDAO ATHENS GR

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SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON SOUDA BAY AMMUNITION

SHORTAGE

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF AUGUST 21 NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE

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BY STEVEN ROBERTS ENTITLED " GREEKS IN CRISIS TOOK U.S.

SUPPLIES - MUNITIONS SEIZED AS CYPRUS ERUPTED BEING RE-

PLACED." BEGIN TEXT: THE GREEK MILITARY COMMAND SEIZED

SEVERAL MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF AMERICAN AMMUNITION DURING

THE CYPRUS CRISIS LAST SUMMER, ACCORDING TO GREEK AND AMERICAN OFFICIALS HERE.

2. THE AMOUNT IS NOW BEING MADE UP, EITHER IN CASH OR IN KIND. "THE MATTER WILL BE SETTLED HONORABLY AND WELL FOR BOTH PARTIES," SAID A SENIOR GREEK OFFICIAL.

3. GREEK OFFICIALS ARE UPSET ABOUT DISCLOSURE OF THE INCIDENT, WHICH THEY DESCRIBE AS "VERY MINOR." IT COMES ONLY A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS RESUMES DEBATE ON THE ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST TURKEY, AND THE MATTER COULD STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE OPPONENTS OF THE EMBARGO.

4. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN VISITING ATHENS IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE PRIVATELY TOLD THE GREEK GOVERNMENT THAT THE EMBARGO WILL PROBABLY BE LIFTED NEXT MONTH.

5. CONGRESS IMPOSED THE EMBARGO IN FEBRUARY ON THE GROUND THAT TURKEY HAD ILLEGALLY USED AMERICAN ARMS IN THE INVASION OF CYPRUS. GREECE HAS BEEN COUNTING HEAVILY ON THE BAN TO FORCE TURKEY TO ADOPT A MORE FLEXIBLE POLICY ON CYPRUS, WHERE ANKARA STILL CONTROLS 40 PER CENT OF THE TERRITORY.

6. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE MISSING AMMUNITION WAS EVER SENT TO CYPRUS. BUT AS ONE DIPLOMATIC ANALYST HERE NOTED: "IT'S NATURAL FOR THE GREEKS TO WANT TO BE AS PURE AS CAESAR'S WIFE. THIS COULD WEAKEN THE CASE FOR THE STRICT APPLICATION OF THE LAW AGAINST TURKEY.

7. THE AMMUNITION WAS OWNED BY THE UNITED STATES BUT EARMARKED FOR THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION AND GUARDED BY GREEK TROOPS. IT WAS ALL CONVENTIONAL AIR FORCE ORDNANCE AND THERE WAS APPARENTLY NO THREAT TO TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS BASED IN GREECE, WHICH REMAIN UNDER AMERICAN CONTROL, OFFICIALS SAID.

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8. THE SEIZED ORDNANCE WAS STORED AT SUDA BAY IN WESTERN CRETE, WHERE GREECE MAINTAINS A MAJOR AIR AND NAVAL BASE. THE UNITED STATES HAS A SMALL FACILITY WITHIN THE BASE, WHICH IS ALSO USED OCCASIONALLY BY OTHER NATO COUNTRIES.

9. ACCORDING TO GREEK OFFICIALS THE ORDNANCE WAS TAKEN SOME TIME BETWEEN JULY 20 AND THE END OF THE MONTH LAST YEAR. ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS, THE PRESIDENT OF CYPRUS, WAS OVERTHROWN IN A COUP D'ETAT ORGANIZED BY THE GREEK JUNTA ON JULY 15. TURKISH TROOPS INVADED THE ISLAND ON THE 20TH. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HERE COLLAPSED AND CIVILIAN RULE WAS RESTORED ON JULY 24.

10. DURING THAT PERIOD THE GREEK ARMY HAD MOBILIZED FOR POSSIBLE CLASH WITH TURKEY, AND THE SENIOR GREEK OFFICIAL NOTED: "WHEN YOU ARE FACING WAR AND DEATH YOU DON'T TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION MANY THINGS."

11. THE LOSS WAS DISCOVERED SEVERAL MONTHS LATER DURING A ROUTINE SECURITY CHECK BY AMERICAN OR NATO PERSONNEL, OFFICIALS SAID. WHEN THE NEW GREEK GOVERNMENT WAS TOLD OF THE SITUATION, IT IMMEDIATELY ADMITTED THE RESPONSIBILITY AND OFFERED TO MAKE GOOD, THEY ADDED.

12. SINCE THE GREEKS DID NOT RETALIATE AGAINST THE TURKISH INVASION OF CYPRUS, MOST OF THE AMMUNITION WAS APPARENTLY NEVER USED. SOME MIGHT HAVE BEEN USED IN TRAINING EXERCISES, THE OFFICIALS SAID.

13. THE SENIOR GREEK OFFICIAL STRESSED THAT ALL THE GREEK MILITARY COMMANDERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SEIZURE HAD NOW BEEN RETIRED. NO SPECIAL PUNISHMENT IS CONTEMPLATED, HE ADDED, BUT NEW SECURITY MEASURES HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED TO PREVENT A RECURRENCE. END TEXT. MAW

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